



US Army Corps
of Engineers

Sacramento District
1325 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

Public Notice

Public Notice Number: 200500197

Date: July 21, 2005

Comments Due: August 20, 2005

In reply, please refer to the Public Notice Number

SUBJECT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, (Corps) is evaluating a permit application to construct the Executive Airport South Ditch project, which would result in direct impacts to approximately 0.55 acres of waters of the United States, including wetlands, which are a remnant stream that has been channelized and is still tributary to the Sacramento River through pumps. This notice is to inform interested parties of the proposed activity and to solicit comments. This notice may also be viewed at the Corps web site at <http://www.spk.usace.army.mil/regulatory.html>.

AUTHORITY: This application is being evaluated under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 for structures or work in or affecting navigable waters of the United States and/or Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for the discharge of dredged or fill material in waters of the United States.

APPLICANT: Warren Peterson
Associate Engineer
City of Sacramento
1395 35th Avenue
Sacramento, California 95822
916-808-1910

LOCATION: The project site is located in Sacramento in Section 36, Township 8 North, Range 4 East, M.D.B.&M., in Sacramento County, California, and can be seen on the Sacramento East and Sacramento West, USGS 7.5 min Topographic Quadrangles.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant proposes to line 1,250 linear feet of stream (aka Executive Airport Ditch) with 440 cubic yards of concrete. Approximately 0.55 acre of streambed will be permanently adversely affected by the project. The project will excavate six inches of soil from 1.28 acres of Executive Airport Ditch and then line it with six inches of concrete. Executive Airport Ditch will be dewatered 15 days prior to commencement of construction.

The applicant has stated that their purpose of the proposed project is to achieve design capacity of Executive Airport Ditch and construct an engineered structure to allow on-going maintenance of design capacity within the applicant's budget constraints. Based on the available information, the Corps believes the overall project purpose is to maintain the channel for flood-control. The applicant stated that it owns the property and leases it to Sacramento County Airports and has a need to maintain it for necessary flood-control purposes. The applicant has also stated it intends to line additional portions of the stream when funds become available. The attached drawings provide additional project details.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Environmental Setting. There is approximately 1.03 acres of streambed wetlands within the project area, which includes approximately 0.31 acre of emergent wetlands. The project area is approximately 2,100 ft. long stream segment of a 3,500 ft. long stream that starts at Sump #22 near Golf View Drive, and ends at Freeport Blvd. Sump #22 pumps water from the City storm drain system into the ditch approximately 1,750 ft east of the project area.

After crossing under Freeport Blvd. in a box culvert, the ditch flows into Willow Slough, which flows south to Sump #28. Sump #28 discharges into the Sacramento River. The ditch is on the south side of the Executive Airport along the north boundary of the Bing Maloney Golf Course. Vegetation in the airport is mowed ruderal vegetation. A gravel maintenance road at the Executive Airport runs along the north bank of the stream. The stream is about 25-35 ft wide from bank to bank and 17 to 25 feet wide at the bottom of the stream. The bed and banks of the stream are currently all soil. The surrounding topography is level.

Most of the bottom of the stream is covered with aquatic vegetation and floating vegetation. The steep banks of the stream are mostly bare soil, with some patches of ruderal vegetation. Water in the ditch was almost completely covered by aquatic emergent and floating vegetation. Species included narrow-leaved cattail (*Typha angustifolia*), perennial smartweed (*Polygonum punctatum*), tule (*Scirpus actus var. accidentalis*), duckweed (*Lemna* sp.), water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), water primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*), and mosquito fern (*Azolla* sp.). Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) was observed in the stream near Freeport Blvd. The banks of the stream support patches of ruderal vegetation. Ruderal species observed include bristly ox-tongue (*Picris echioides*), prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*), johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*), common evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*), and dallis grass (*Paspalum dilatatum*). A number of trees grow on the banks of the stream on the eastern and western ends. The middle stretch of the stream is kept free of tall trees because it is in the airport flight path. Tree species include Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), cork oak (*Quercus suber*), ash (*Fraxinus* sp.), bishop pine (*Pinus muricata*), deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodora*), and tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp.). Wildlife species observed include bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) and California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*). Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*).

The applicant has indicated that the site contains suitable habitat for Northwestern pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata marmorata*), giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*), Western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*), Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) and Sanford's arrowhead (*Sagittaria sanfordii*). However, these species were not observed by the applicant's consultant.

Alternatives. The applicant has provided the following information concerning project alternatives. Additional information concerning project alternatives may be available from the applicant or their agent. Other alternatives may develop during the review process for this permit application. All reasonable project alternatives, in particular those which may be less damaging to the aquatic environment, will be considered.

The applicant has stated that the objectives of their project are to implement a solution to the maintenance constraints to enable the City to meet its maintenance obligation. The applicant has also stated they consider alternatives practicable if; 1. Design capacity is maintained in the ditch; 2. Capital costs are not prohibitive; and 3. Ongoing maintenance can be achieved within the City's budget constraints.

The applicant has also provided the following alternatives which they evaluated:

1. No project. Continue with existing level of annual, manual maintenance. This involves maintenance crews trimming vegetation from the banks. This alternative fails to achieve the objective of the project. The alternative does not affect the grade in the channel or emergent vegetation. This alternative has the same annual maintenance costs as are paid today.
2. Intensified maintenance. In addition to annually maintaining the ditch manually, mechanical methods would be used periodically. A bobcat would be lowered into the ditch to grade the bottom of the channel. It is a difficult task for a bobcat operator to achieve the desired grade with a low flow channel. This alternative would reduce but not eliminate standing water in the ditch. Vegetation would persist. This alternative has the highest ongoing expense.
3. Mechanical maintenance with summertime diversion. This alternative would redirect flows from Sump 22 to existing storm drainpipes during the summertime to allow emergent vegetation to senesce. This would provide maintenance crews with the opportunity of removing the emergent vegetation. With the emergent vegetation

removed, water would move through the ditch more easily but would not fix the grade. To fix the grade, this alternative would need to be combined with the intensified maintenance alternative.

4. Permanent diversion (off-site alternative). This alternative would permanently redirect flows from Sump 22 to existing storm drainpipes. Existing pipes would need to be resized to accommodate winter flows because a drainage area of >[number] acres would be added. This is the environmentally preferable alternative but has the highest capital costs because of replacing existing storm drain mains with bigger pipes.

5. Proposed project. Line the ditch with concrete. The proposed project achieves the project objectives. It corrects the problems with the grade, there are sufficient capital funds to construct the project, and it keeps annual maintenance costs down.

6. Culvert. This alternative would place flows in Executive Airport Ditch in a culvert. This is the engineering preferred alternative because it most easily achieves the objectives of the City. It would be the least expensive project to build and would ensure the lowest annual maintenance costs. The City determined that lining the ditch with concrete is environmentally preferable to the culvert alternative.

7. Another culvert alternative would be to install a lid over the ditch. This alternative would avoid federal jurisdiction and remove emergent vegetation but would not fix the grade of the ditch.

Mitigation. The Corps requires that applicants consider and use all reasonable and practical measures to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources. If the applicant is unable to avoid or minimize all impacts, the Corps may require compensatory mitigation. The applicant has proposed to purchase riparian habitat credits at a mitigation bank. However, the mitigation proposal is not practicable because currently, there are no riparian habitat credits available.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORIZATIONS: The applicant has indicated they have applied for Water quality certification, or a waiver, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act from the State Regional Water Quality Control Board. The applicant has also indicated that they have applied for a Streambed Alteration Agreement with the California Department of Fish & Game.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES: The applicant has provided a cultural resources assessment for review. Pending review of this document, the Corps will either make a finding that no cultural resources are within the project's area of potential effect, or if potentially eligible cultural resources may be affected by the proposed project the Corps will initiate consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office as appropriate.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: The proposed activity may affect Federally-listed endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat. The Corps has initiated consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, for potential affects to listed giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*), delta smelt (*Hypomesus transpacificus*), winter and spring-run chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Central Valley steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and Essential Fish Habitat. The USFWS and NMFS have determined that the project is not likely to adversely affect these species.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT: The proposed project may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat. The Corps has initiated consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service, pursuant to Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. As mentioned in above in Endangered Species, the NMFS has determined that the project is not likely to adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat.

The above determinations are based on information provided by the applicant and our preliminary review.

EVALUATION FACTORS: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the described activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the described activity, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the described activity will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. The activity's impact on the public interest will include application of the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (40 CFR Part 230).

The Corps is soliciting comments from the public, Federal, State, and local agencies and officials, Indian tribes, and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition, or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS: Written comments, referencing Public Notice 200500197, must be submitted to the office listed below on or before August 20, 2005:

Justin Cutler, Project Manager
US Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
Sacramento Office
1325 J Street, Room 1480
Sacramento, California 95814-2922
Email: Justin.Cutler@usace.army.mil

The Corps is particularly interested in receiving comments related to the proposal's probable impacts on the affected aquatic environment and the secondary and cumulative effects. Anyone may request, in writing, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests shall specifically state, with particularity, the reason(s) for holding a public hearing. If the Corps determines that the information received in response to this notice is inadequate for thorough evaluation, a public hearing may be warranted. If a public hearing is warranted, interested parties will be notified of the time, date, and location. Please note that all comment letters received are subject to release to the public through the Freedom of Information Act. If you have questions or need additional information please contact the applicant or the Corps' project manager Justin Cutler, 916-557-5258, Justin.Cutler@usace.army.mil.

Attachments: 7 drawings